



## *NPS Mission & History*

### *NPS Fundamentals I*

# Module 2: The Organization of The NPS

In this module, you will learn about the organizational structure that the NPS uses to manage these sites. This module is divided into the following pages:

### **The National Park Service**

The NPS Director

NPS Regions

NPS Sites and Offices

NPS Partners

Your Park or Office

*After completing this module, you should be able to do:*

- Explain how the National Park Service is organized.
- Describe the role of the NPS director and NPS partners.
- Identify the different NPS regions.
- Explain issues that are universal to all NPS parks and offices.



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# The National Park Service

The NPS is a bureau made up of parks, offices, centers, programs, and other divisions. To see how the NPS is organized, [click here](#).

All parts of the organization uphold the NPS mission:

***The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.***

In this section, you will learn how the NPS is organized, and how it works with partner groups outside the organization.

# The National Park Service Director



**The NPS Director,  
Jon Jarvis**

At the top level, the NPS is led by a director who has been appointed by the President. Because this director is a presidential appointee, he or she generally holds office only as long as a given administration is in power. The director works to carry out the NPS mission, which is central to the organization's efforts, and to the president's agenda.

The link below contains a complete list of the NPS directors and the main points of their tenures.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSHistory/directors.htm>

# The National Park Service Director



**The NPS Director,  
Jon Jarvis**

The NPS Director works in the NPS Washington, DC office, which is known as the Washington Area Service Office (WASO). The Director is responsible for the management, administration, policy, and overall direction of the National Park Service. He or she meets quarterly with the National Leadership Council (NLC) which includes the NPS director, deputy directors, associate directors, and regional directors, and they meet to consult on major policy and program issues.

Learn more:

[National Leadership Council](http://www.nps.gov/policy/nlc/NLC.htm)

<http://www.nps.gov/policy/nlc/NLC.htm>

# The National Park Service Regions

There are seven NPS regions. Each is led by a regional director, who is responsible for the parks within his or her geographic region and reports to the Director.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



# The National Park Service Sites and Offices

Together, the seven NPS regions contain more than 83 million acres of NPS administered land, and those millions of acres of land contain a diverse array of natural and historic resources including battlefields, seashores and waterways, and trails and parkways. Each of these sites has a superintendent or site manager who is responsible for the management of the area and reports to the regional director. Because the sites managed by the NPS are so diverse, they have different designations, that describe the kind of site they are. A partial list includes:

NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD	NATIONAL PARK
NATIONAL CEMETERY	NATIONAL PARKWAY
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE	NATIONAL PRESERVE
NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK	NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
NATIONAL MEMORIAL	NATIONAL RIVER
NATIONAL MONUMENT	NATIONAL SEASHORE
NATIONAL LAKESHORE	NATIONAL TRAIL

Learn more: [Designation of National Park System Units](http://www.nps.gov/legacy/nomenclature.html)  
<http://www.nps.gov/legacy/nomenclature.html>

# The NPS is More Than Just Parks



There are many offices, centers, programs, and other divisions within the NPS that support the individual sites and the Service as a whole. Each has a different function.

One office that you will often hear about is WASO—the Washington Area Service Office. This includes regional offices and the other offices, centers, programs, and divisions that make up an essential part of the National Park Service.





**The U.S. Park Police NPS  
Photo**

***The U.S. Park Police*** provides law enforcement services, primarily in urban areas, which include the investigation and detention of persons suspected of committing offenses. They also provide law enforcement services for the many civic events conducted within the NPS.

***The Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs (OLCA)*** coordinates the agency's legislative program and congressional relations. This includes preparing agency positions, witnesses, and testimony for Congressional hearings. The OLCA for the NPS addresses the needs of all NPS units and NPS programs. The OLCA also works on legislation authorizing new areas and studies for new areas for potential additions to the National Park System. To fulfill this responsibility, the Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs works closely with Congressional personal and committee staff and NPS managers in the field to provide information about potential legislation.

Learn more: [The United States Park Police](http://www.nps.gov/uspp/)

<http://www.nps.gov/uspp/>





Indian Head Rail Trail,  
MD. NPS Photo

***The Denver Service Center (DSC)*** is the centralized planning, design, and construction office for the NPS. Denver Service Center staff also provides parks and regional offices with services ranging from contracting to project management to visual information. They provide environmentally responsible and fiscally sound products along with private industry partners.

Learn more: [The Denver Service Center](http://www.nps.gov/dsc/)  
<http://www.nps.gov/dsc/>

***The NPS Federal Lands to Parks Program*** assists communities to create new parks and recreation areas by transferring surplus Federal land to state and local governments. This program helps ensure public access to properties and stewardship of the properties' natural, cultural and recreational resources.

Learn more: [The NPS Federal Lands to Parks Program](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/flp/)  
<http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/flp/>



Indianapolis City  
Market. NPS Photo

***The National Register of Historic Places*** is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. It was authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the NPS.

Learn more: [National Register of Historic Places](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/)

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/>

# The National Park Service Partners

Working with partner organizations greatly enhances the NPS's ability to protect park resources and provide educational and other visitor services. There are many kinds of partners. Some provide funding for NPS programs, while others provide technical expertise for NPS projects. Some are at the national level, while others are at the park or office level. While these partners are not actually a part of the NPS, they all share the Service's interest in the management of the national parks.

Examples of some partners :

***NPS Concessions.*** The NPS has more than 600 concession contracts with private companies that offer services to park visitors, such as food and lodging, that the NPS does not provide.

Learn more: [NPS Commercial Services](http://concessions.nps.gov/)

<http://concessions.nps.gov/>

# The National Park Service Partners



*The National Park Foundation.* This charitable, nonprofit corporation encourages and administers donations to the NPS from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Learn more: [The National Park Foundation](http://www.nationalparks.org/)  
<http://www.nationalparks.org/>



*The Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL).* This not-for-profit organization is made up of approximately 50 members—often called cooperating associations—that support NPS communications, education, and interpretation efforts by, for example, operating bookstores and developing publications.

Learn more: [The Association of Partners for Public Lands](http://www.appl.org)  
<http://www.appl.org>

# The National Park Service Partners



The role of some NPS offices and programs is centered on creating partnerships with groups outside of the service. In particular, the NPS National Center for Recreation and Conservation has programs that assist local conservation efforts. Some of these programs include:

*Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA).* This NPS program works with community groups and local and state governments to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways.

Learn more: [Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/)

<http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/>



**RTCA Staff and  
Projects. NPS Photo**

# The National Park Service Partners



**NPS Partnership  
Office. NPS Photo**

The *National Center for Recreation and Conservation*, a community resource of the National Park Service. Rivers & Trails staff work with community groups and local and State governments to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways and its programs.

There are many more partners that contribute to the NPS, to learn more about a number of these partners, visit the link below.

[NPS Partnerships](http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/)

<http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/>



# NPS Organization



As you have seen, the NPS is a large organization that encompasses a variety of parks and offices around the country.

## **Hierarchy**

The NPS has a chain-of-command structure that begins with the NPS Director, extends down to the Regional Directors, and continues to each park or office. In general, the highest-ranking position at a park is a Superintendent. Similarly, the NPS Training Centers have a Superintendent, and in Regional Offices the highest ranking position is the Regional Director. Each park or office organizes its employees into different functional divisions, such as maintenance, resource management, and visitor and resource protection. Each division is lead by a Division Chief. The size and function of a park or office will determine which divisions it has and how the divisions are organized. We recommended you take time to learn how your workplace is organized. This will help you understand how resources are allocated and how responsibilities are divided in the park where you are working.



# NPS Mission



## A Mission or Vision for all

Every park and office must follow **the 1916 Organic Act** and the NPS mission. A park must also follow its enabling legislation which is passed by Congress to officially create a park. In most cases, this legislation describes the park's purpose and why it was set aside to become part of the National Park System. Some parks are established by presidential proclamation, some by other means.

Offices within the National Park System do not have enabling legislation but may have a vision or mission statement, and though it is not a legal document, it outlines the purpose and the reason for the existence of each office. You may want to seek out the mission or vision statements for the offices with which you work.

# Park Enabling Legislations



When Congress passes the law to institute a new site that law is considered the site's "enabling legislation".

The unit's enabling legislation identifies the site's purpose. The NPS cannot allow any activities that violate either the Organic Act of 1916 or the site's enabling legislation. It is important to have a good understanding of the enabling legislation for the park where you are working.

Research why the park or office where you are working was established. To find the enabling legislation, follow one of the links below.

## **Title 16 United States Code**

### **Chapter 1 - [National Parks, Military Parks, Monuments, and Seashores](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/16/chapter-1)**

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/16/chapter-1>

### **Chapter 1A - [Historic Sites, Buildings, Objects, and Antiquities](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/16/chapter-1A)**

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/16/chapter-1A>

# Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policies



## Laws

NPS parks and offices are subject to many other laws besides the 1916 Organic Act. Some of the most important are described below.

[Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36 \(36CFR\)](#). This regulation describes how the NPS must use, manage, and protect people, property, and resources within areas under its jurisdiction.

[http://www.nps.gov/drto/parkmgmt/upload/DRT0%20compendium%202008\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/drto/parkmgmt/upload/DRT0%20compendium%202008_final_.pdf)

[Endangered Species Act of 1973](#). This law protects threatened and endangered species and the habitats on which they depend.

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/biology/endangeredspecies/>

[Clean Water Act of 1972](#). This law protects and restores the quality of the nation's waters by regulating and limiting polluting discharges.

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/policies/cleanwateract.cfm>

# Federal Policies and Programs



Many policies and programs that affect NPS parks and offices—as well as their employees—are created by the federal government and the Department of Interior. For example:

- Use of government property, including computers, telephones, and credit cards, is regulated by federal ethics standards.
- Health insurance and retirement benefits are federal programs.

Learn more: [Learning the Ropes](http://www.doiu.nbc.gov/orientation/ropes.html)

<http://www.doiu.nbc.gov/orientation/ropes.html>

# NPS Policies

At the national level, the NPS has created Management Policies, Director's Orders, handbooks, and reference manuals to ensure that policies are consistent Service-wide. These policies cover a wide-range of topics. For example:

- Director's Order #43 explains how the NPS uniform is to be worn.
- NPS Policy 2.3.1 requires each NPS unit to maintain an up-to-date General Management Plan.



**NPS Photo:**  
**Management Policies**

Due to their number, it is outside the scope of this course to cover all of these policies. It is up to you to review these documents to ensure that you are aware of all of your responsibilities as an NPS partner. The more you know, the more valuable you are to your individual work place and to the NPS as a whole. It is important that you are able to use this tool to find policies that impact your job.

# Local Policies



**NPS Photo: Gettysburg  
National Military Park**

Each park or office also sets its own policies. One of the most important among these is the park's workplace safety plan.

To understand how these issues impact your particular workplace, you will need to do some investigating on your own. It is recommended that you:

1. Take time to find out what divisions there are, what their roles are, and how they are organized.
2. Learn more about the laws that impact the NPS.
3. Review the Department of Interior orientation web site and the Director's Orders web site, and familiarize yourself with the directives that pertain to you.

Talk to your supervisor about your local emergency plan and other local procedures. The knowledge you gain from this effort will be valuable for daily success in your job.